

# Temples of Northern India on a 17 Day Spiritual Odyssey!

## With Spiritual guide Finbarr Ross – Jan. 15 – 31, 2015

Experience the beauty that is India on a sacred spiritual journey that will take you to some of India's most magnificent temples and holy sites. India has been a place of sacred pilgrimage for thousands of years. It is the home of many religions and spiritual practices such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Yoga.

Our magical adventure will take you throughout the country of India, on four plane rides, a plane and rickshaw ride. You will see a magnificent light show, and take a sunrise boat cruise on the sacred Ganges River. You will explore ancient and modern cities, temples, fire temples, colorful bazaars, and much more!

*India holds some of the most holy and sacred places on earth.*

### **The Jain Temple of Ranakpur**

Moving into the depths of the mountains of Ranakpur, we will visit its stunning Jain Temple, also considered to be the supreme example of its architecture. This temple is dedicated to Adinatha, whom the Jainists hold is the "Original Lord" and first Tirthankara, responsible for formulating and organizing humans to live in a society harmoniously and the dharma of compassion.

This spectacular temple is also constructed of light-colored marble, but is very different, architecturally, from the Persian and Mughal-influenced style of the Taj Mahal. Since Jainists believe that control of the cosmos comes from the Tirthankara's conquest of the cardinal direction, the temple is symbolically designed with four faces.

### **Taj Mahal**

Just to the south of the walled city of Agra lies the mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal, the third wife of emperor Shah Jahan, so beloved by him that his grief inspired the construction of one of the wonders of the world. The very words "Taj Mahal" breathe of magic, devotion, and the force of love. It is literally one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.

We will greet it at sunrise, as the morning sun lights up the white marble and inlaid stones which make this "crown of palaces" the height of Mughal architecture. Calligraphy inscribes passages from the Qur'an throughout the complex, domes of marble reach up to the sky in perfect symmetry, inlays of jasper, black marble, and herringbone tile the floors with delicately and dizzyingly complex decorations.

Finbarr will take you on a journey of ascension and awakening consciousness. Finbarr shares a deep connection to the holy sites of India and has been leading tours there since 2002. He is connected to the energy centers of the land and its holy temples and will lead the group in meditations designed to open you to the fullness of the experience and to your own awakened consciousness.

**If you've felt called to visit India, this tour is for you!**

### **Jan 15th – Day 1, Thu: Arrival in Delhi**

Today you will arrive in Delhi, India's bustling capital city. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to **Hotel the Royal Plaza**. Delhi is a bustling metropolis, which successfully combines both the ancient and the modern aspects of Indian culture. The city's many monuments, located amidst tall, modern skyscrapers, stand as silent reminders of the region's ancient legacy.

Delhi's strategic location was one of the main reasons why successive dynasties chose it as their seat of power. It is not surprising that today Delhi is actually a conglomerate of seven cities. The division between the old, walled city and what is known as New Delhi marks a division in lifestyles. The walled city retains its past traditions, and when visiting, one can get a glimpse of its many facets. In contrast, New Delhi strives to match the pace of the twenty-first century. Overnight in New Delhi at Hotel the Royal Plaza. Group welcome dinner.

### **Jan 16th – Day 2, Fri: Delhi Sightseeing**

This morning your visit will focus on Old Delhi, the seventeenth-century walled city of Shah Jahan. We will visit mosque. Next, we'll visit the **Raj Ghat**, a memorial erected on the site where Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, was cremated.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we will embark on a tour of New Delhi, driving along **Rajpath**, the capital's broadest avenue. Along the way, you will see **Parliament House**, now known as Sansad Bhavan, a low, circular structure that covers more than five acres of land. We will also pass by **Rashtrapati Bhavan, the President's Palace**; the official residence of the president of India. Constructed on Raisina Hill, this imposing structure was initially built as the official residence of the British Viceroy of India.

We will also see **India Gate**, a 138-foot-high arch that stands at the eastern end of Rajpath. It is inscribed with the names of 85,000 Indian Army soldiers who lost their lives in World War I, the North-West Frontier operations that occurred at the same time and the 1919 Afghan fiasco. Below burns the Amar Jawan Jyoti, the Eternal Flame, in tribute to all martyred soldiers of India. The Amar Jawan Jyoti was lit after the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War.

Next we will stop at **Humayun's Tomb**. The tomb, an elegant example of early Mughal architecture, was commissioned by Humayun's widowed queen, Haji Begum, in the sixteenth century. *Architecturally it is the forerunner of the world-famous Taj Mahal.*

We move on to **Birla Temple**, which is one of the major landmarks of New Delhi. Also known as the Laxmi Narayan Temple, the temple was built in 1939 as a dedication to Vishnu, and it enshrines almost all the deities of the Hindu pantheon. The entire temple is decorated with relief carvings of mythological scenes. The temple reaches an impressive 165 feet at its highest point. Overnight at Hotel the Royal Plaza.

### **Jan 17th – Day 3, Sat: Delhi / Varanasi**

After breakfast, we connect to our flight to Varanasi (formerly Benares). India's holiest city is located on the banks of the sacred Ganges River. Upon your arrival you will be met and transferred to The Gateway Hotel.

In the afternoon we will visit the **Ghats and witness the evening Aarti ceremony**. Dinner following the ceremony back at Hotel. Overnight at The Gateway Hotel.

### **Jan 18th – Day 4, Sun: Varanasi**

Early this morning, embark on a **sunrise boat cruise on the Ganges River** during which you will be presented with the incredible tableau of multitudes of devotees paying homage to the Sun God.

The cruise will be followed by breakfast, and then a **walking tour of the old city**. Afterwards, we will tour **Sarnath**, the site of Buddha's first sermon. While there, you will visit the museum, one of the most important in India. You will also see the many stupas, or shrines, and **Mulagandha Kuti Vihar**, a Tibetan Buddhist shrine built by the Mahabodhi Society containing a life-size golden image of the Buddha and colorful murals and frescoes painted by a Japanese artist. Free time for shopping and Lunch (day includes breakfast). Overnight at Varanasi – The Gateway Hotel.

### **Jan 19th – Day 5, Mon: Varanasi / Khajuraho**

After breakfast we'll fly to **Khajuraho**, the religious and political capital of the Chandela Dynasty. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to Taj Chandela Hotel. *The rest of the afternoon is free to relax and enjoy the beautiful hotel grounds, restful atmosphere, and spa services.*

After an early dinner (the famous Taj spread is more deserving of the word banquet than buffet) we will enjoy a fabulous **Sound & Light Show** on the grounds of the western complex, introducing us to the history and culture of the temples. Overnight at Taj Chandela Hotel.

### **Jan 20th – Day 6, Tue: Khajuraho /Eastern & Western Temples**

This morning visit the **Western group of temples**. The Western group contains the largest and loveliest temples of the area. Of this group, the **Kandariya Mahadev** temple, dedicated to Shiva, is the most perfect. With its elaborate

100-foot-high spire and bands of beautiful carving, it represents Chandela art at its best. Kandariya Mahadev shares a high terrace with the older and simpler **Devi Jagadamba** temple. Shopping and personal time with lunch in town. In the afternoon, we will visit the main temples in the **Eastern group**. These temples are more modest and less ornate than the Western temples, their architectural style reflecting the simplicity inherent in Jainism. Overnight at Taj Chandela Hotel.

### **Jan 21st – Day 7, Wed: Orchha/Jhansi/Agra**

This morning we drive to Jhansi, stopping en route in **Orchha** to visit the medieval city founded by Bundela rulers. Orchha contains palaces and temples built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that have withstood the onslaught of time remarkably well. Continue on to Jhansi to board the train to Agra, the last capital of the Mughal Empire and home of the one and only Taj Mahal. Upon arrival in Agra, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Arrive in Agra and check in to our hotel – the afternoon is free, with dinner at the hotel. Overnight at Clarks Shiraz.

### **Jan 22nd – Day 8, Thu: Agra**

An early-morning visit to the **Taj Mahal**, or “crown of buildings”, presents an opportunity to admire this dream in marble as it welcomes the rising sun. The Taj Mahal is widely recognized as “the jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world’s heritage.” After lunch we will visit **Agra Fort**, a huge red-sandstone structure built by the famous Mughal emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century. It houses the beautiful Pearl Mosque and many other noteworthy structures. Afternoon is free to relax, shop or explore.

### **Jan 23rd – Day 9, Fri: Agra / Jaipur**

Post-breakfast drive to Jaipur, the Pink Capital City of Rajasthan. Arrive and check in at Hotel Country Inn & Suites. The rest of the day is free to relax or explore.

### **Jan 24th – Day 10, Sat: Jaipur / Ranakpur**

Drive Ranakpur, arrive and check in at Hotel Maharani Bagh.

### **Jan 25th – Days 11, Sun: Ranakpur**

Set in a remote and peaceful valley, **Ranakpur** is the site of the largest and most beautifully preserved **Jain Temple** in India. The main temple dates back to 1439 and is called the “four-faced temple”. It is dedicated to Adinath, one of the founders of the Jain religion, and has 29 halls supported by 1,444 carved pillars, no two of which are alike. The play of light and shadow on the minutely carved figures offers an effect that tantalizes the senses.

### **Jan 26th – Day 12, Mon: Ranakpur / Udaipur / Mumbai**

#### **Air India AI 471 Dep. 1745 / 1905**

Morning is free to relax. You will be transferred to Udaipur airport in time for your flight to Mumbai. Upon arrival in Mumbai you will be met and transferred to Hotel Peninsula Grand.

### **Jan 27th – Day 13, Tue: Mumbai / Aurangabad / Tapovan**

Fly early morning to Aurangabad. Upon arrival you will be met and driven to Tapovan. En route, we stop at the **Ellora Caves** for a few hours of connection with the incredible energy of the ancient temples carved into the mountainsides. Tea & snacks at the nearby hotel café. Overnight in Dhule at The Residency Park.

### **Jan 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> – Day 14/15, Wed/Thu: Tapovan**

2 days at Tapovan, Anne & Bruce’s Homa Therapy Organic Farm to experience the Agnihotra fires there (daily sunrise/sunset), ancient Sanskrit mantra, local Shivadom Temple, traditional rural village and Tapovan School.

### **Jan 30th – Day 16, Fri: Tapovan / Aurangabad**

Morning activities in Tapovan. Later in the evening you will be driven to Aurangabad, arrive and check in at ITC Rama International.

**Jan 31st – Day 17, Sat: Aurangabad / Mumbai/ Home**

Morning fly to Mumbai, upon arrival you will be met and taken for a brief tour of Mumbai and its temples. Later in the evening after dinner you will be transferred to airport for flight back home.

**Note: You fly into Delhi and out of Mumbai.**

**TOUR INCLUDES:**

India Land Tour Fee (*Excluding Airfare*)  
With Cash/Check Discount  
Single Supplement Rate  
Tips to drivers, guides, hotel and restaurant staff  
All hotel accommodations (16 nights)  
All entrance fees to sites  
All ground/train and internal air transportation (Delhi/Varanasi/Khajuraho,  
Udaipur/Bombay/Aurangabad/Bombay)  
Full breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day

**US DOLLARS:**

\$4900\*  
\$4750\*  
\$980 (additional)  
\*\$150/person included in tour  
price for tips

**TOUR DOES \*NOT\* INCLUDE:**

International Airfare  
Meals not mentioned above  
Extras at hotels  
Mineral water, tea, coffee, after meal beverages, personal expenses (i.e laundry, valet service, telephone calls, postage, etc.)

*\* 2015 Tour price is guaranteed unless the US \$/Euro exchange rate drops 5% or more from the 06/1/14 rates or gasoline goes up over 5% from 06/14 India prices. If required, a fuel or exchange-rate surcharge will be declared in March. This has never exceeded \$100 per person.*

**\$500 deposit secures your place on the journey with the balance due 60 days prior to departure.**

**For reservations and information please contact**

**Gayle Lawrence**  
***Journeys of Discovery Travel***

Email: [info@ajourneyofdiscovery.com](mailto:info@ajourneyofdiscovery.com)

[www.ajourneyofdiscovery.com](http://www.ajourneyofdiscovery.com)

Florida: 727-785-5563